

REMARKS

Claims 4-17 have been objected to as being in improper form because a multiple dependent claim cannot depend from any other multiple dependent claim. Claims 2-4 and 6-16 have been amended to correct dependency inconsistencies. Claims 5 and 17 have been canceled without prejudice.

35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

Claims 1-3 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claims 1 and 3 have been amended to overcome these rejections as suggested by the Examiner.

35 U.S.C. § 103

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 907 (JP 07-290907) in view of Europe 319 (EP 438319) and Hayashi (US 6,371,180). Claim 2 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 907 in view of Europe 319 and Hayashi and further in view of Watanabe et al. (US 5,109,903). Claim 3 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 907 in view of Europe 319 and Hayashi and further in view of Gerresheim et al. (US 5,996,661) and Iwamura et al. (US 6,109,317).

Claim 1 has been amended to further recite the lug grooves each being provided with a groove volume reducing portion in the vicinity of an intersecting portion between the lug grooves and the outer longitudinal grooves, each groove volume reducing portion reducing a groove volume of each lug groove, each groove volume reducing portion being a tie-rod which protrudes from a groove bottom of each lug groove (canceled claims 5 and 17). The art of record

does not disclose or suggest these and the other claimed features. Consequently, claim 1, as well as claims 2-4 and 6-16 which depend from claim 1, are in condition for allowance.

In light of this amendment, all of the claims now pending in the subject patent application are allowable. Thus, the Examiner is respectfully requested to allow all pending claims.

Respectfully submitted,

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